CCSD's

DISABILITY INFORMATION SHEET

No. 3
2001

Message to Readers:

By now, you will have received the first two issues of ***CCSD's Disability Information Sheets***. We hope you are finding the information in these newsletters of interest in your work. We are currently distributing these *Disability Information Sheets* to a broad range of users, but we recognize that there are many other individuals and groups across Canada for whom this information may also be useful. If you know of someone or some organization that you think would benefit from these information sheets, please send us their mailing address or have them contact us directly to be added to the mailing list.

If YOU are part of a network of people working with or on behalf of persons with disabilities, you may wish to receive a bulk shipment of copies of *CCSD's Disability Information Sheets* so that you can distribute them within your own network. Just let us know how many copies you would like – in English and/or French.

We are very pleased to tell you that additional funding support has been obtained from Human Resources Development Canada. With this support, the CCSD will be able to produce and distribute five more issues of these *Disability Information Sheets*.

And don't forget: Some of the topics to be covered in subsequent issues will be determined based on the disability-related data needs identified by YOU, our readers. So please feel free to give us your feedback. See page 2 for coordinates of the CCSD's Disability Information Program. Thank you.

This is the **third Disability Information Sheet** published by the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD). In this information sheet, we focus on statistics related to children with disabilities, and using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY), we expand our focus to the wider population of children with special needs.

While there are many Canadian survey databases that can be used to obtain information on adults with disabilities – as were described in Information Sheet No. 1 – few provide data on children with disabilities. But if the numerous requests received by the CCSD are any indication, there is a growing need for statistical information about children with disabilities.

The Definition of Children with Disabilities

In the Health and Activity Limitations Surveys (HALS) conducted in 1986 and 1991, children with disabilities were identified using a different set of criteria than was used for adults with disabilities in other surveys. While disability for adults was defined in terms of activity limitations in a number of areas – such as mobility, agility, seeing, hearing, speaking, other physical, and non-physical limitations – children with disabilities were identified using a wider range of characteristics. In addition to having activity limitations, children were considered to have a disability if they had at least one of a number of chronic conditions – such as diabetes or muscular dystrophy, for example – or if they used technical aids such as hearing aids or crutches, or if they were prevented or limited from participating in age-appropriate activities.

Indices of children with special needs:

Building on this more comprehensive definition of disability for children used in the HALS, the CCSD has developed several indices to identify children with "special needs" using data from the NLSCY, which is the most current

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CCSD's Disability Research Information Program
309 Cooper Street, 5th Floor, Ottawa, ON K2P 0G5
Tel: (613) 236-8977, ext. 259; fax: (613) 236-2750
E-mail: drip@ccsd.ca

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source of survey information on children with disabilities in Canada. Differences among the indices are due to the number of characteristics used to identify children with special needs. Please note that we use data from the 1994 NLSCY here because the more recent NLSCY surveys do not contain as wide a range of variables in this area. Among the variables that can be used to construct a "flag" or "screening questions" for disability are the following:

Chronic Conditions, Activity Limitations & Disabilities:

Question on the 1994 NLSCY: "Does [child's name] have any of the following long-term conditions (i.e., that have lasted or are expected to last six months or more) that have been diagnosed by a health professional?"

Among children aged 0 to 11 years:

- Allergies (14.3%)
- Asthma (5.6%)
- Bronchitis (2.9%)
- A heart condition (0.9%)
- Epilepsy (0.2%)
- Cerebral palsy (numbers suppressed due to low sample size)
- Kidney disease (0.4%)
- Mental handicap (0.3%)
- Other condition (3.6%)
- Other activity limitation in age-appropriate activities (3.8%)

Among children aged 6 to 11 only:

(Questions about the following were not asked of children under age 6)

- Learning disability (3.7%)
- Emotional problems (1.7%)
- Chronic pain or discomfort (1.4%)
- Visual impairment (numbers suppressed due to low sample size)
- Hearing impairment (1.3%)
- Speech impairment (1.4%)
- Mobility impairment (0.8%)

Although a number of different options have been investigated in order to construct an index that will identify children with special needs, four possible indices are presented here. Please note that two apply to children aged 0 to 11, and two apply only to children aged 6 to 11:

Index #1

(for children aged 0 to 11, includes allergies):

This index includes all the variables listed above (allergies, asthma, bronchitis, heart condition, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, kidney disease, mental handicap, other condition, other activity limitation in age-appropriate activities) for children aged 0 to 11 years. In 1994, nearly one-quarter (24.1%) or about 1.1 million of all Canadian children in this age group had at least one of these special needs; 17.5% had

only one special need, and 6.5% had two or more special needs.

Index #2

(for children aged 0 to 11, excludes allergies):

This index includes all the variables listed above as in Index #1, except allergies. Since the most prevalent special need is allergies, it is useful to determine the size of the population with special needs when allergies are not considered. In 1994, 13.8% of Canadian children in this age group – or over 0.6 million children – had one or more of these special needs, excluding allergies.

Index #3

(for children aged 6 to 11, includes allergies):

This index includes all the variables listed above, as well as learning disabilities, emotional problems, chronic pain or discomfort, visual impairments, hearing impairments, speech impairments, and mobility impairments for children aged 6 to 11. In 1994, one-third (33.3%) or nearly 0.8 million Canadian children in this age group had one or more of these special needs.

Index #4

(for children aged 6 to 11, excludes allergies):

This index includes all the variables used in Index #3, except allergies. In 1994, just over one in five (21.2%) or nearly half a million Canadian children in this age group had one or more of these special needs, excluding allergies.

These indices demonstrate that a substantial portion of Canadian children are affected by some type of special need related to their health or activity limitation. While allergies contribute to these high numbers, the proportion of children and the number affected by other special needs is still quite high.

Data from the 1994 NLSCY

Characteristics of Children with Special Needs

Using the definition of special needs outlined in Index #4 above, the following characteristics were found for children aged 6 to 11 (unless otherwise stated) with special needs:

Lone-parent families:

- Children with special needs were more likely than those without special needs to be living in lone-parent families (21.1% compared to 15.3%).

Parents' labour force activity:

- Among children in two-parent families, 35.3% of those with special needs had both parents working in the paid labour force, compared to 45.8% of children with no special needs.[1]

Housing:

- Children with special needs were more likely than those with no special needs to live in housing that required major repairs (12.2% compared to 7%).

Social Concerns:

- Children with no special needs were slightly more likely than those with special needs to have a large network of four or more close friends (43.1% compared to 39.3%).
- Children aged 10 and 11 with no special needs were more likely than those with special needs to feel that most other children liked them (78.3% compared to 71.4%). However, the majority of both groups felt that they were generally liked by most other children. (Data concerning this question are only available for children aged 10 and 11.)
- Children with special needs and those with no special needs were almost equally likely to "do things with their friends" four to seven times per week (53.8% and 55.8% respectively).
- Children aged 10 and 11 with special needs were more likely than those with no special needs to report that they were bullied by other children at school all or most of the time (8.1% compared to 2.9%). Another 10.1% of children with special needs reported being bullied some of the time,

[1] In the 1988 National Child Care Survey in Canada, about 241,000 families (or just under 9%) with at least one child under 13 years of age had a child with a long-term condition or health problem. For 68,000 of those families (around 28%), the child's condition limited the kinds of work the parents were able to do or their hours of work. About 77,200 of those families (just under one-third) reported that there were limited child care options available to them because of the needs of their children. It is likely that child care limitations for children with special needs contribute to the lower levels of labour force participation found among their parents, particularly among their mothers.

compared to 6.3% of those with no special needs. (Data concerning this question are only available for those aged 10 and 11.)

- Similarly, 15.6% of children aged 10 and 11 with special needs reported that children said mean things to them all or most of the time, compared to 7.8% of those with no special needs. (Data concerning this question are only available for those aged 10 and 11.)
- Children aged 10 and 11 with special needs were more likely than those with no special needs to report that they felt "left out" at school all or most of the time (8.2% and 4.1% respectively). (Data concerning this question are only available for those aged 10 and 11.)
- Children aged 10 and 11 with no special needs were more likely than those with special needs to feel safe at school all or most of the time (90.7% and 85% respectively).

Summary

This brief glimpse into the lives of Canadian children with special needs highlights a number of important findings. First, regardless of whether or not allergies constitute a "special need" in children, the proportion of children with some type of special need is larger than most people might have believed. Second, regardless of which area of life we examine, children with special needs are more likely to face exclusion or disadvantage.

From these data, we can see the lower labour force participation rates among mothers of children with special needs. For many households, this probably translates into lower family incomes. As well, families affected by a disability often have disability-related expenses for such things as medication, equipment, assistive devices, and other disability-related supports and services. For some families, these expenses can be very high. This means that in some instances – particularly where the disability is severe – there can be less money coming in with only one parent in the labour force, and more money going out on disability-related expenses. As well, the data show that children with special needs have a greater likelihood of living in housing that requires major repairs, which presents further economic disadvantage to them and their families.

There are a number of indicators of social exclusion which serve to highlight the particular plight of children with special needs. They experience more bullying by other children. They are more likely than those with no special needs to feel unliked by their peers and to feel "left out." They are also less likely to feel safe at school. Although in most cases, the differences between children with special needs and those without special needs are fairly small, the differences *do* exist and they extend into many facets of the social experience. Despite all the challenges, however, it is encouraging that the majority of children with special needs can find some positive social and school experiences. When looking at indicators of friendships, for example, the differences between children with and without special needs are less pronounced.

DISABILITY INFORMATION ON-LINE: www.ccsd.ca/drip

Don't forget to check out the CCSD's Disability Research Information Page (DRIP), which provides centralized access to all of our on-line disability-related resources, plus links to other sites of interest. We have tried to make this subsite as accessible as possible to people with disabilities and whenever possible, to present materials in various formats (such as HTML and PDF) and in both English and French.

Users of the website are encouraged to give us their feedback about the content of the site or how we are meeting our accessibility objectives of clarity of content, simplicity of design, structural integrity, and ease of navigation.

We would also welcome your feedback on anything contained in these Information Sheets, as well as your suggestions about future disability research topics to be covered. You can send us your feedback in a letter or an e-mail to the CCSD at the coordinates on page 2. Or you can log onto our website at www.ccsd.ca/drip and use our on-line form.

HELP SAVE CANADA'S TREES Each issue of *CCSD's Disability Information Sheet* is being posted on our website in both PDF and HTML formats. If you would prefer to receive an electronic copy of the Information Sheet, rather than a paper copy through the mail, please visit our website at www.ccsd.ca/drip. Click on "Mailing List" and add your e-mail address in the space provided. As subsequent issues are produced or other new material is posted, we will notify you by e-mail. You can then help yourself to the information – at your convenience – and help save a few trees in the process.

Disability, Education & Labour Force Participation

The CCSD continues to receive requests for information about education and labour force participation related to persons with disabilities. In *Information Sheet No. 2*, we presented these data by gender. Below, we present two more tables – this time focussing on age. People interested in reviewing these data for 1993 and 1995 should visit the CCSD's disability information subsite at www.ccsd.ca/drip.

WHAT'S IN THE TABLES?

Table 1 shows the percentage of persons with and without disabilities – by both age group and education level – who were employed all year long. Table 2 shows the other end of the work activity spectrum by indicating the percentage who were not in the labour force at all during the year. Not included in these tables, therefore, are those who had varying degrees of labour force involvement between these two states. It is also important to note that only those who were no longer pursuing their studies full-time were included in this analysis.

Overall pattern: Higher levels of education mean greater likelihood of working

It is clear that, as the level of education increases, both persons with and without disabilities are increasingly more likely to be employed all year and increasingly less likely to be "not in the labour force"

at all during the year. This relationship holds true for all age groups.

Post-secondary education has most impact on younger persons with disabilities

Perhaps the most dramatic impact of education is seen among younger persons with disabilities, that is, those aged 16-34. Among persons without a high school diploma, over half (53.4%) of those with disabilities aged 16-34 were out of the paid labour force all year, compared to 14.7% of their counterparts without disabilities (Table 2). Having a high school diploma improves the situation somewhat, as this percentage drops to 39.4% for those with disabilities (and 6.8% for those without disabilities). However, post-secondary education seems to bring about the most dramatic improvement. Among persons with disabilities, post-secondary graduates under age 35 were the most likely to have had some labour force participation during the year: only 13% were not in the labour force at all during 1998 – meaning that 87% *were* in the labour force at some point during the year. Not surprisingly, this group was also the most likely to be successful at holding a job all year long (57.7%, as shown in Table 1).

Table 1

Per Cent Employed All Year in 1998
Persons with and without Disabilities
by Age and Highest Level of Education Attained
Not Enrolled as Full-time Students

		Age		
		16-34 yrs	35-49 yrs	50-64 yrs
Person with a disability:	Less than high school	22.7%	23.5%	16.7%
	High school graduate	30.5%	45.7%	23.8%
	Post-secondary graduate	57.7%	54.2%	35.2%
Person without a disability:	Less than high school graduate	47.3%	63.9%	47.3%
	High school graduate	66.2%	77.7%	62.1%
	Post-secondary graduate	76.2%	82.8%	69.7%

Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using Statistics Canada's Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (masterfile).

Table 2

Per Cent Not in the Labour Force at any point in 1998
Persons with and without Disabilities
by Age and Highest Level of Education Attained
Not Enrolled as Full-time Students

		Age		
		16-34 yrs	35-49 yrs	50-64 yrs
Person with a disability:	Less than high school	53.4%	57.6%	72.5%
	High school graduate	39.4%	33.2%	61.2%
	Post-secondary graduate	13.0%	26.0%	51.5%
Person without a disability:	Less than high school graduate	14.7%	11.7%	36.3%
	High school graduate	6.8%	7.0%	24.8%
	Post-secondary graduate	2.8%	4.3%	17.7%

Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using Statistics Canada's Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (masterfile).

First Set of Supplemental Tables for CCSD's Disability Information Sheet #3:

Percent Employed All Year (1993, 1995, 1998), Persons with and without Disabilities, by Age and Highest Level of Education Attained (not enrolled as full-time students)

Percent Employed All Year in 1993, Persons with and without Disabilities, by Age and Highest Level of Education Attained (not enrolled as full-time students)

Disability Status	Highest Level of Education Attained	Age 16-34	Age 35-49	Age 50-64
Person with a disability	Less than high school graduate	30.8%	30.6%	12.7%
	High School Graduate	43.0%	38.9%	27.6%
	Post-secondary graduate	46.6%	62.1%	35.3%
Person without a disability	Less than high school graduate	44.8%	58.3%	46.9%
	High school graduate	62.5%	75.2%	58.2%
	Post-secondary graduate	74.7%	81.3%	68.3%

Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development, using Statistics Canada's Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (masterfile).

Percent Employed All Year in 1995, Persons with and without Disabilities, by Age and Highest Level of Education Attained (not enrolled as full-time students)

Disability Status	Highest Level of Education Attained	Age 16-34	Age 35-49	Age 50-64
Person with a disability	Less than high school graduate	--	28.0%	10.2%
	High School Graduate	41.3%	31.4%	15.8%
	Post-secondary graduate	52.0%	55.5%	32.9%
Person without a disability	Less than high school graduate	45.5%	60.3%	49.6%
	High school graduate	63.9%	74.9%	58.9%
	Post-secondary graduate	77.2%	82.0%	67.9%

--sample size too small to provide reliable estimate

Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development, using Statistics Canada's Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (masterfile).

Percent Employed All Year in 1998, Persons with and without Disabilities, by Age and Highest Level of Education Attained (not enrolled as full-time students)				
Disability Status	**Highest Level of Education Attained**	**Age 16-34**	**Age 35-49**	**Age 50-64**
Person with a disability	Less than high school graduate	22.7%	23.5%	16.7%
	High School Graduate	30.5%	45.7%	23.8%
	Post-secondary graduate	57.7%	54.2%	35.2%
Person without a disability	Less than high school graduate	47.3%	63.9%	47.3%
	High school graduate	66.2%	77.7%	62.1%
	Post-secondary graduate	76.2%	82.8%	69.7%
Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development, using Statistics Canada's Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (masterfile).				

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Second Set of Supplemental Tables for CCSD's Disability Information Sheet #3, 1993, 1995, 1998:

Percent not in the Labour Force at any point during the year (1993, 1995, 1998)
Persons with and without Disabilities
by Age and Highest Level of Education Attained
(Not Enrolled as Full-time Students)

Percent not in the labour force at any point in 1993, Persons with and without disabilities, by age and highest level of education attained, not enrolled as full-time students

Disability Status	Highest Level of Education Attained	Age 16-34	Age 35-49	Age 50-64
Person with a disability	Less than high school graduate	39.7%	47.4%	70.8%
	High School Graduate	25.9%	39.1%	55.7%
	Post-secondary graduate	20.5%	19.3%	53.2%
Person without a disability	Less than high school graduate	16.3%	14.1%	34.5%
	High school graduate	8.1%	9.2%	27.8%
	Post-secondary graduate	3.5%	4.4%	17.0%

Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development, using Statistics Canada's Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (masterfile).

Percent not in the labour force at any point in 1995, Persons with and without disabilities, by age and highest level of education attained, not enrolled as full-time students

Disability Status	Highest Level of Education Attained	Age 16-34	Age 35-49	Age 50-64
Person with a disability	Less than high school graduate	42.0%	47.4%	77.7%
	High School Graduate	21.0%	40.0%	62.2%
	Post-secondary graduate	--	24.2%	55.1%
Person without a disability	Less than high school graduate	14.0%	12.9%	34.3%
	High school graduate	7.1%	9.1%	27.8%

	Post-secondary graduate	3.9%	5.0	18.0%
-- sample size too small to provide reliable estimates.				
Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development, using Statistics Canada's Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (masterfile).				

Percent not in the labour force at any point in 1998, Persons with and without disabilities, by age and highest level of education attained, not enrolled as full-time students

Disability Status	Highest Level of Education Attained	Age 16-34	Age 35-49	Age 50-64
Person with a disability	Less than high school graduate	53.4%	57.6%	72.5%
	High School Graduate	39.4%	33.2%	61.2%
	Post-secondary graduate	13.0%	26.0%	51.5%
Person without a disability	Less than high school graduate	14.7%	11.7%	36.3%
	High school graduate	6.8%	7.0%	24.8%
	Post-secondary graduate	2.8%	4.3%	17.7%
Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development, using Statistics Canada's Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (masterfile).				

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